

The Strange Case of Dr. Beddoes

; 205

smiled more kindly: *The History of Isaac*

Jenferm/^relaring

'the reform of a drunken labourer and his return

of sobriety and industry*, sold ten thousand copierorrrf"

few weeks, and forty thousand by the end of 1796. But

Dr. Beddoes, always seeking some new thing, never fol-

lowed up his triumph; though it is true thatthere wasfound

among his papers at his death a fragment intriguingly

entitled 'Simple Stephen And His Friend the Double-

Faced Cook*. One recognises there the father of the

author of 'The Oviparous Tailor'. Meanwhile, however,

his prancing pen had galloped him into trouble in quite another quarter.

The French Revolution had broken out.

Dr. Beddoes

became Jacobin in his sympathies. The University of

Oxford, on the other hand, did not. During the autumn

of 1792 an advertisement had appeared in a Shropshire

paper near his home, appealing for charity for French

Emigrant Clergy. Dr. Beddoes at once countered by

distributing a political handbill in which he denounced

the said Clergy and complained, it may well be with

truth, that their advocates were 'tending to inflame the

people of England to a thirst of blood against the French'.

This attitude and the outcry it provoked were a main

cause of his resigning his lectureship at Oxford. The next

two years were occupied with *Isaac Jenkins*, Factitious

Airs, and the first schemes for the Pneumatic Institution;
but he was not yet silenced as a political pamphleteer, and
from 1795 to 1797 he continued very busy making things
hot for Mr. Pitt. His principles were far, indeed, from
blood-red. He became bitterly disgusted and disappointed
as the Revolution went on, losing that amiable aspect
which it bore in the beginning'. But he very reasonably
hated both war abroad and repression at home; and he
said so. The best-known of his attacks was his *Essay on*